CHILDREN'S BOOK
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Burst from their lips the ardent prayer.

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THE

MILLER

AND

HIS GOLDEN DREAM.

"With moderate blessings be content,
Nor idly grasp at every shade;
Peace, competence, a life well spent,
Are treasures that can never fade:
And he who weakly sighs for more—
—Augments his misery, not his store."

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"THE RUBY RING," &c.

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Advertisement.

In the construction of the following little Poem, the Author has declined the aids of Genii, &c.—the powerful auxiliaries of her two former works,—on the belief that a moral truth requires little of artificial embellishment to render it attractive. She presents therefore a simple unadorned tale to her young readers, as an experiment; not without hope that their reception and approval of it may be such, as to sanction future efforts, and to confirm her in the propriety of her present opinion.

THE

MILLER.

IF, 'mid the passions of the breast,
There be one deadlier than the rest,
Whose poisonous influence would control
The generous purpose of the soul,
A cruel selfishness impart,
And harden, and contract the heart;
If such a passion be, the vice
Is unrelenting Avarice.
And would my youthful readers know
The features of this mortal foe,
The lineaments will hardly fail
To strike them in the following tale.

In England—but it matters not
That I precisely name the spot—
A Miller liv'd, and humble fame
Had grac'd with rustic praise his name,
For many a year his village neighbours
Felt and confess'd his useful labours;
Swift flew his hours, on busy wing
Revolving in their rosy ring:
His life, alternate toil and rest,
Nor cares annoy'd, nor want oppress'd.

Whang's mill, beside a sparkling brook,
Stood shelter'd in a wooded nook:
The stream, the willow's whispering trees,
The humming of the housing bees,
Swell'd with soft sounds the summer breeze;
Those simple sounds, that to the heart
A soothing influence impart,
And full on every sense convey
Th' impression of a summer's day.

A cot, with clustering ivy crown'd,
Smil'd from a gently sloping mound,
Whose sunny banks, profusely gay,
Gave to the view, in proud display,
The many colour'd buds of May;
Flowers, that *spontaneous* fringe the brink
Of sinuous Tame, and bend to drink.
My native River! at thy name
What mix'd emotions thrill my frame!
Through the dim vista of past years,
How shadowy soft thy scene appears!
With earliest recollections twin'd,
To thee still fondly turns my mind;
While Memory paints with faithful force
The grace of thy meandering course
'Neath bending boughs, whose mingling shade
Now hid, and now thy stream betray'd.—
Bright—though long distant from my view—
Rise all thy magic charms anew;

And on thy calm and shallowy shore
Again, in Fancy's eye, I pore,
The steps retrace, our infant feet
So buoyant trod, and once more meet
Each object in my wandering gaze
That form'd the joys of " other days."
All, all return, and with them bring
The " life of life," its vivid spring.
The sun is bright, the flowers re-bloom,
Cold friends are kind, kind e'en the tomb:
For one brief moment 'tis forgot
There once *were* those, who now *are not*.
Eyes beam, and hearts as fondly beat,
Voices their wonted tones repeat—
But 'tis on Fancy's ear alone—
I wake, alas! and *all are gone!*

Yet, Tame, the theme of childish praise,
For thee were fram'd my earliest lays;

Thy banks of all were deem'd the pride,
Thy flowers, by none to be outvied.
Those days are past—and sad I view
The time I bade thee, Tame, adieu:
Those days are gone, and I have seen
Full many a river's margent green;
Full many a bursting bud display
The rich luxuriance of May—
But loveliest *still* thy flowers I deem,
And dearest thou, my native stream!

Thus clings around our early joys
A mystic charm no time destroys,
Endearing recollections more,
When all of *real* joy is o'er.

Forgive, Whang, this digressive strain;
The journey done, I'm yours again.
If for a simile I sought
Back through the distant tracks of thought,

The flowers I gather'd by the way
Upon your fabled banks I lay;
Where primrose groups were yearly seen
Peeping beneath their curtain green,
With aromatic mint beside,
And violets in purple pride.
In gay festoons, o'er hazles thrown,
Hung many a woodbine's floral crown;
The brier-rose too, that woos the bee,
And thyme, that sighs its odours free.
The lark, the blackbird, and the thrush,
Hymn'd happiness from every bush:
The Eden to their lot assign'd
Fill'd with content the feather'd kind;
Example worthy *him*, I ween,
Who reign'd sole monarch of the scene—
The Miller.——"What!" you will enquire,
"Possess'd he not his soul's desire?
Ah! could his wishes soar above
The calm of this untroubled grove?"

Alas! his frailty must be told—
Whang entertain'd a love for gold:
And none, whatever their demerit,
That did of wealth a store inherit,
But gain'd (so strong the dire dominion)
Whang's reverence, and his best opinion.
"*Gold*, my dear spouse," would cry his wife,
"Is call'd an *evil* of our life."
"True," Whang rejoin'd, "the only *evil*
Whose visits I consider civil;
But 'tis, alack!—the thought is grievous—
The evil most in haste to leave us."

'Twere proper that my readers knew,
That, by *degrees*, this passion grew;
Not *always* was the silly elf
So craving, coveting of pelf,
Though he was ever prone to hold
In high esteem *pound-notes* and *gold:*

And CIRCUMSTANCES sometimes root
Firm in the mind the *feeblest* shoot;
A truth, erewhile, this man of meal
By his example will reveal.

"True," would he say, "I am not poor:
What then? may I not wish for more?
This paltry mill provides me food,
Keeps dame and I from famine—good!
Yet, mark the labour I endure,
A meagre living to secure.
'Tis lucky that I have my health,
Since this poor mill is all my wealth;
Though irksome, I confess, to toil
To catch Dame Fortune's niggard smile,
When she so prodigal can be
To men of less desert than me,
Throwing her bounties in their lap,
Almost without their asking—slap!

'Tis lucky that I have my health.
Since this poor mill is all my wealth:

'Twas but to-day that I was told,
With truth I'll vouch, a pan of gold
Seen by a neighbour in a dream—
—Thrice dreamt on, though, as it should seem—
My neighbour dug for, as directed—
(Shame had such warning been neglected!)—
Dug for, and, better still, he found
A treasure hidden under ground,
In the same spot, or thereabout,
His happy dream had pointed out.
Such riches *now* his coffers fill,
No more he labours, let who will.
I wish with all my heart," he cried,
"I wish such luck may me betide!"
So saying, from the bags he started,
While through his brain vague fancies darted,
And with a brisker air and gait
He left the mill to seek his Kate,
The golden vision to relate.

At eve, before the cottage-door,
They talk'd the wondrous story o'er;
And every time it was repeated,
With warmer hope Whang's brain was heated.
Complacent to his bed he hies,
Certain, when sleep should close his eyes,
Like *him* to dream who gain'd the prize:
And doubtless *might* have dream'd the same;
But neither sleep nor vision came.
He toss'd and turn'd him all night long,
Tried all manœuvres—all were wrong.
" Had never known the like before,
Was us'd to sleep quite sound, and snore;
But now, when he desir'd it most,
The art to sleep seem'd wholly lost."

When Hope (t' indulge a short digression)
Gains of weak minds complete possession,
She buoys them up, like cork and sail,
'Gainst Disappointment's heavy gale.

At eve, before the cottage-door.
They talk'd the wondrous story o'er;

So Whang, with undishearten'd mind,
Trusting the *future* would be kind,
Rose from his dreamless bed next morn
Neither discourag'd nor forlorn:
With one idea fill'd, he sought
His mill, but little there he wrought.
Week follow'd week, and months the same,
Whang slept indeed, but could not dream;
Yet, prescient still of his success,
His industry grew less and less.
He thought it wrong in him to labour,
Who, by and by, might, like his neighbour,
Receive the happy wish'd-for warning,
And wake to thousands in the morning!
It was amusing to observe
His solemn pomp, his proud reserve,
His sad exchange of glee, for state,
That ill-beseem'd his rustic gait.
His temper open, far from vicious,
Chang'd too—for he was grown ambitious.

He, that so early erst was seen
With active step to cross the green,
Now slept, supinely slept away
The prime, the golden hours of day.
The sun shot down his highest beam
Upon th' unprofitable stream;
Whang's duty bade him sléep and dream.
I will not say but Whang was born
With sense enough to grind his corn,
Or on a market-day to tell
Whether 'twere good to buy or sell;
But since the store his neighbour found,
I dare not say his wits were sound.
In sad neglect the mill-wheel stood
That long supplied his daily food;
And marvelling neighbours shook the head,
Amaz'd the Miller's glee was fled.
Some thought his conscience overcast
Was but a judgment for the *past*.

Old Robin with a wink could tell
That "Whang had manag'd matters well;
He shrewdly guess'd how things would end,
For gain, ill-gotten, would not spend."
And Gammer Gabble *now* could prate
That her "last sack had wanted weight."
She "knew the Miller long ago,
And wonder'd *others* did not know."
So all most prudently prepare
To trust their grain to better care.
Thus, by degrees the stores declin'd,
Till Whang had scarce a batch to grind.
No matter! Hope still talk'd the more
About his unfound hidden store:
But inauspicious yet appear'd
His wish; no warning voice was heard.
Now Mistress Whang, of nature humble,
Had smil'd to hear her husband grumble,
And would admonish him, 'tis said,
To chase vain phantoms from his head.

She, more incredulous, insisted
His visions ought to be resisted;
Thought they had chang'd his very nature,
And sourly curl'd each homely feature:
She felt full dearly they bestood
Sad substitutes for wholesome food.

At issue long, as oft the case,
The war of words to peace gave place.
In truth the visionary Whang
Ceas'd now entirely to harangue
On this dear theme:—he hated *doubt*,
And Kate had many, staunch and stout:
And in a hostile muster, they
Gave her the better of the fray.
Though silent on his favourite theme,
He did resolve, when he *should* dream,
And *find* th' anticipated pelf,
To *keep* the secret to *himself;*

"My pretty Window that commands,
Those meadows green and wooded lands.

For he averr'd it " quite vexatious
His wife should be so pertinacious."
No passions vain *her* heart misled:
The path of humble peace to tread
Was her sole aim; of this secure,
She felt content, nor sigh'd for more.
She griev'd to find her counsels failing,
They were sincere, though unavailing;
And oft midst wishes, fears, and sighs,
'Twas thus she would soliloquise:—
" My pretty window! that commands
Those meadows green, and wooded lands,
So sunny, that the latest ray
Its panes receive of parting day.
O! with what joy, when near it plac'd,
I've watch'd my husband homeward haste!
Or heard, from fair returning late,
The welcome sounds of 'Holla, Kate!'
Through it I trace on every hand
Beauties, would grace a fairy-land,

And think that, like a grateful eye,
It smiles on all beneath the sky.
There, too, my sweet geranium blows,
And mignionette, and crimson rose,
When all without is clad in snows.
I doubt me, if a princess feels
More joy than that which o'er me steals,
When light and morn my slumbers break,
And to this blissful scene I wake.
I cannot form a wish beside
What Heaven's bounty has supplied,
Save that to Whang I could impart
The same content that fills my heart;
Yield him that thankful state of rest,
Or teach to *prize the good possess'd.*"

Good fortune seldom comes too late;
For lo! at last indulgent Fate
Smil'd on the importunate swain,
And eas'd at length his anxious pain.

Dreams—one,—two,—three,—th' important number,
Omen'd him hence to quit his slumber,
With spade and mattock arm'd, to delve
Six feet—nay, I believe 'twas twelve,
Close by the long-forsaken mill—
He flies, the mission to fulfil!
The mattock rings, the spade descends,
The sturdy arm its vigour lends;
At such light labour who could sleep?
Whang is already three feet deep!
Upon the spade observe him smile:
What sees he?—what?—a broken tile;
The very tile his dream foretold,
A landmark to his pan of gold!
Upturns one token more—a bone!
And now, behold the broad flat stone!
A moment on its ample size
He gaz'd with wide distended eyes—
"Beneath *that* is the pan!" he cries.

"'Twas under such a stone as this
That neighbour Drowsypate found his.
So then, at last, my hopes are crown'd!
Come, then, let's raise thee from the ground."
But, ere to lift the stone he tries,
He shook his head, not over wise,
And, with a self-approving glance,
One foot a little in advance,
With nose and lip contemptuous curl'd,
That said, "A fig for all the world!"
He cried, "My wife, she, silly trot!
Shall never know the wealth I've got:
To punish her I made a *vow;*
The time is come, I'll keep it now.
She could not dream, poor fool! not she;
Some trite old tale of 'busy bee,'
Of saving pins, and pence, and groats,
For ever occupied *her* thoughts.
Besides, the hussey laugh'd outright
Whene'er I pass'd a dreamless night.

One foot a little in advance.
With nose and lip contemptuous curl'd.
That said."A fig for all the world!"

Yes, yes, I will requite her scorn;
She'll rue it, sure as she is born!"——
Ah, bootless boast! the stone so great
Exceeds by far his strength in weight.
In vain he digs and delves the ground,
And clears away the rubbish round,
And gathering strength with his vexation,
Widens the fearful excavation.
He cannot move the stone for life;
So forc'd at last, he calls his wife,
Imparts the fact so long repress'd,
And glads, reluctantly, her breast.
The news he stated wak'd her fear;
What gave delight at first to hear,
One apprehension turn'd to pain—
She trembled for her husband's brain.
"Can it be true?" cried she, misdeeming;
"Dear Whang, too surely thou *art dreaming*:
Try, recollect thyself, good man—"
"Tut, hussey! why, I'll shew the pan:

Only a minute's help I ask,
And thou shalt see't—a trifling task
Just to remove, I know not what,
A stone, it may be, from the spot.
Come, come, thy hand." They gain the door,
When, turning, Kate asks, "*Are you sure?*"
"*Sure? yes,*" vociferates her spouse.
This said, they issue from the house—
"I'm *certain*, as to all I've told,
As if e'en *now* I *touch'd* the *gold:*
Sure as that I no more will bear
This russet doublet now to wear:—
That I no more will condescend
To own Ralph Roughspeech for *my friend*,
Nor tolerate the pert monition
Of neighbours, in my chang'd condition:
Sure—but, ye Powers! what do I see?—
The mill! the mill!—Oh! woe is me!
My only stay, my certain aid,
All level with the earth is laid!——

——— ye powers! what do I see? ———

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Presumptuous! I have scorn'd my fate,
And wrought this mischief: all too late
The error of my life I see,
And misery my portion be.
Time, that no more I may recal,
By wise men priz'd, and dear to all,
How have I squander'd! how abus'd!
My friends, my neighbours, basely us'd!
How shall I bear, acquaintance meeting,
Scorn to behold where once was greeting?
Now comes *their* turn to treat the fool
With jeers, contempt, and ridicule.
Laugh'd at on all sides—and to know
And *feel* I have *deserv'd* the blow!
Undone by mine own discontent!—
But ah! too late I do repent.
Forc'd now in poverty to roam,
I soon must quit this quiet home;
And where with thee, poor Kate! to fly?—
Oh! I could lay me down and die!

Wretch that I am! Kate, Kate, forgive!"
"*My* pardon, dearest Whang, receive:
But 'twas not *I* who gave thee health,
Strength, talent to improve thy wealth;
Who cast thy lot in such fair land,
Or bless'd thee with such liberal hand.
O! turn to *Him* with thankful prayer
Who deigns e'en yet thy life to spare;
Implore His pardon—kneel with me;
This ruin might have cover'd *thee.*
But thou art spar'd, and yet remain
The means our livelihood to gain:
A heartfelt willing perseverance
Will mend our lot before a year hence.
Thou knowest well that neighbour Ralph
Each morn will spare an hour or half
To help us to repair the mill."
"Doest think," Whang blushing ask'd, "he will?"
"Yes, yes, I do believe so too,
He was a neighbour kind and true;

And if his counsels gave offence,
The fault was in my want of sense.
Yet, ideot! I"—"Enough!" cried Kate,
Exulting in her alter'd mate;
"To see our faults in their just light,
Is next akin to acting right.
But time no longer let us waste;
I'll to friend Roughspeech quickly haste:
Own thou, meanwhile," she smiling cried,
"To have a help-mate in thy bride
Is *treasure perhaps* of equal worth
With *aught conceal'd beneath the earth.*"
With look of conscious proud delight,
She caught the sound of, "Kate, thou'rt right;"
While a "small voice" responsive join'd
Applausive music in her mind.

Then turn'd she from the yawning ground,
And, eying Whang with thought profound,

Saw in his look, on her that bent,
A meaning most intelligent.
A wish defin'd she saw, and knelt;
Beside her soon his form she felt:
Then, with join'd hands uplift in air,
Burst from their lips the ardent prayer.
With brighter hopes from earth they rose,
Nor long (—for so the story goes)
In idle wailings spent the day:
Just then a neighbour pass'd that way.—
Whang turn'd his head; a crimson streak
Rush'd hastily across his cheek,
And Cath'rine's palpitating breast
A momentary shame confess'd:
For well they knew, Old Robin's tale
Soon through the village would prevail,
And bring a host about their ears,
With pity some, and some with jeers.
But *guilt* and *folly* must endure
The *caustics* that effect a cure.

Whang therefore strove, with patient heart,
To bear th' anticipated smart;
Nor vainly strove: the threaten'd ill
Fell, he with patience met it still.
Few in the morning of his grief
Or gave, or proffer'd him relief.
Those who had *counsell'd heretofore,*
Excus'd themselves from doing more,
" Presuming nothing *they* could offer
Would meet acceptance from the scoffer."
Others, meanwhile, of nature good,
Assisted, comforted, withstood
With honest scorn the worldling's cant,
Nor shunn'd a neighbour, though in want.
To all, Whang bore an humble mien,
By all, his contrite spirit's seen;
Till even they who smil'd at first,
When o'er his head the tempest burst,
Were forc'd, in justice, to declare
His penitence *appear'd sincere.*

"They trusted, nay, *almost believ'd*
His loss of character retriev'd:"
And, soften'd by his chang'd address,
"Good fortune *wish'd*, and happiness."

And he *was* happy—"he was bless'd
Beyond desert," he oft confess'd,
By friends, by all the good caress'd.
A smiling garden, rescu'd mill,
His dear old cottage on the hill,
A faithful wife, a conscience clear,
Shed brightness on each coming year.

The church-yard stone, that bears his name,
Records his failing and his fame;
And, in his life and death, conveys
A moral truth to future days.

FINIS.